Testimony of
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"LRA, Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, AQIM and Other Sources of Instability in
Africa"

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the

opportunity to appear before you today. This hearing is very timely, as we have

seen a number of important developments during the past year that have influenced

the security situations in East and West Africa. In East Africa, the African-led,

internationally supported African Union Mission in Somalia, known as AMISOM,

has helped Somalia address the terrorist challenges within its borders.   AMISOM

is working with Somali forces to advance our goals of stabilizing Somalia by

pushing back al-Shabaab to create physical space for the Transitional Federal

Government (TFG) and others to establish governance. In Central Africa, national

military forces, in coordination with the African Union, and with assistance from

U.S. military advisors, have renewed their efforts to end the threat posed by the

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA is a weakened force, but it continues to

abduct, terrorize and uproot communities across three countries – the Central

African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and South

Sudan. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)

estimates that more than 465,000 people were displaced or living as refugees during 2011 as a result of the LRA threat. In West Africa, key countries in the region have intensified individual and regional counterterrorism efforts, but have had to respond to new challenges stemming from recent events in Libya and Mali.

Al-Qaeda (AQ) and other extremist groups' ideology and tactics are alien and illegitimate to the vast majority of Africans and key governments have repeatedly demonstrated their determination to frustrate the efforts of the extremists to exploit the region's peoples and resources. However, Africans are confronting a number of violent extremist groups who seek out opportunities to launch attacks against African and sometimes Western targets, mobilize recruits and finance through force or ideology, and secure safe-havens in isolated, ungoverned areas.   While these disparate groups have unique histories, objectives, and methods of operation, they have a common modus operandi in exploiting porous borders and weak security institutions, and capitalizing on the inability or unwillingness of governments to protect their populations and respond to the aspirations of their peoples, particularly a quickly expanding number of young people.

The Threat

East Africa

In the Horn of Africa, al-Qaeda operatives historically used Somalia as a safe haven from which to launch attacks throughout East Africa. Attacks on the American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and an Israeli jetliner and tourist hotel in Kenya in 2002 demonstrated the seriousness of this threat to Westerners and Africans alike. More recently, elements of the Somalia-based al-Shabaab have become the primary terrorist threats in East Africa. On February 9 of this year, al-Qaeda's Ayman al-Zawahiri and al-Shabaab's emir released a joint video to formally announce a merger of the two organizations. Nevertheless, al-Shabaab is not a monolithic organization; while its senior leaders are committed to al-Qaeda and a global agenda, most of the group's lower ranking fighters have a more domestically-focused agenda based on clan loyalty and Somali nationalism.

Somalia's instability has had serious consequences for the region. Al-Shabaab conducts conventional and asymmetric attacks in Somalia and has pursued a diverse set of targets throughout the region. A small cadre of foreign fighters has used Somalia as a safe haven and training center, although their future role within al-Shaabab is unclear. Additionally, during the recent famine in Somalia, al-Shabaab blocked critical humanitarian organizations from operating in areas it controls thereby creating a more severe crisis and increasing the suffering

of the Somali people. Al-Shabaab's capabilities were demonstrated by two July 11, 2010 suicide bombings in Kampala, Uganda, the group's first international attacks. Illicit traffic and migration between Yemen and Somalia as well as the large numbers of Somalia refugees throughout the Horn of Africa, enable extremist efforts to use networks to transfer money, exchange tactics, and potentially relocate fighters between al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and al-Shabaab.

Central Africa

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been active since 1986, making it one of Africa's oldest, most violent, and most persistent armed groups. The Government of Uganda pushed the LRA out of Uganda in 2006, and the LRA moved west into the border region of the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and what has become the Republic of South Sudan. Although the LRA has been weakened and its numbers reduced, it continues to pose a serious threat to the people of this border region. The LRA survives by preying on vulnerable, remote communities, and abducting youth to fill its ranks. Although the LRA has been weakened and its numbers reduced, it continues to pose a serious threat to the people of this region. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that the LRA launched 278 attacks in 2011.

The governments of Uganda, the CAR, the DRC, and South Sudan, in collaboration with the African Union and with assistance from U.S. military advisors, continue to dedicate significant materiel and human resources to end the threat posed by the LRA. They have made some progress in dispersing the LRA and reducing its numbers. However, there are significant challenges in apprehending the LRA's top leaders and ending the LRA threat. The LRA operates in very small groups across vast territory roughly the size of California, much of it densely-forested. The LRA exploits communal conflicts and attacks remote communities, which lack basic road, telecommunications, and governance infrastructure. The LRA is a destabilizing force in Central Africa, Joseph Kony is under indictment by the International Criminal Court, but the organization does not directly threaten the United States.

West Africa

The security situation in West Africa has evolved during the past year, but the ability of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) or other extremist organizations to threaten U.S. interests outside North Africa remains limited. AQIM's leadership has remained in northern Algeria and the group continues to identify closely with its northern African roots, but severe pressure from Algerian security forces during the past year has forced the group to shift its area of operation to the northern Sahel. From isolated camps in northern Mali, AQIM

kidnapped as many as twenty hostages of various nationalities since 2010, engaged in smuggling, launched individual attacks against local security outposts in Algeria, Mauritania and Niger, and increased efforts to establish commercial and familial links with local communities in its areas of operation. The group has not demonstrated the capability to threaten U.S. interests outside of West or North Africa and it has not threatened to attack the U.S. homeland.. However, we have warned American citizens traveling in the Sahel to avoid a number of areas due to AQIM's practice of kidnapping Westerners.

We witnessed a number of important developments during the past year that affected the security situation in West Africa. AQIM accumulated substantial financial resources from ransoms paid for the release of European hostages. These resources have supported its survival in extremely austere conditions, financed purchases of a range of light and heavy weapons, and enabled the group to establish commercial links with local communities. At the same time, AQIM has clearly benefited from the proliferation of arms from Libya and the movement of heavily armed and trained fighters from Libya to several already over-burdened Sahelian countries. While AQIM has failed to mobilize a significant number of new recruits or generate popular support in the area, it has successfully maintained its foothold in northern Mali and resisted efforts to disrupt its supply lines. The recent coup in Mali and Tuareg unrest in the northern part of the country has

hampered counter-terrorism efforts in the area although the National Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA) and the vast majority of Tuaregs in the region have resisted AQIM efforts to establish closer ties.

We are also carefully watching the security situation in northern Nigeria. A loosely-organized collection of factions known as Boko Haram has carried out attacks on Nigerian and international interests, and has attempted to exploit the legitimate grievances of northern populations to garner recruits and public sympathy. Boko Haram is not a monolithic group, although its various factions remain focused on discrediting the Nigerian government. Although some factions of Boko Haram have expressed a desire to attack Western targets, Boko Haram appears focused primarily on local Nigerian issues and actors, and to date the group's actions have responded principally to political and security developments within Nigeria. Attacks ascribed to members of this group have improved in sophistication and increased in number over the last few years, and we take the potential threat to American lives and interests very seriously. There are reports of contact between elements of Boko Haram and other extremists in Africa. While we are careful not to conflate these groups, we are monitoring the situation closely. It is vital to emphasize that religion is not the primary driver of extremist violence in Nigeria. While some seek to inflame Muslim-Christian tensions, Nigeria's religious and ethnic diversity is one of its greatest strengths.

United States Engagement Principles

Our approach to these security challenges reflects our recognition that a comprehensive long-term approach is required to address insecurity in Africa and military solutions alone are insufficient and at times are counterproductive. We have learned from experience that the threats in Africa are diverse and our allies' approaches to these threats reflect a range of perspectives, priorities, and capabilities.   Our engagements reflect several fundamental principles:

Regional Ownership: The key countries in the affected regions must lead -- and be seen leading – efforts to address these challenges. Our regional partners have consistently emphasized that Africa's security is the responsibility of the Africans themselves and it is vital that the United States and other partners maintain supporting roles. It is crucial that our allies take responsibility for their own security. We will help them stave off legitimate terrorists but will avoid the trap of "Americanizing or westernizing" these counterterrorism fights. Violent extremists in Africa and elsewhere constantly seek to bolster their own legitimacy by attempting to draw us into the conflict and our allies have repeatedly stressed the importance of resisting these attempts to provoke counterproductive actions. Supporting regional leadership and engaging with our allies also helps us to understand how our actions could impact long-standing historical issues in

individual countries or regions and the intended or unintended consequence or our policy choices.

Promoting Good Governance: President Obama's first priority for Africa is to help build strong and stable democracies.   Our security engagement cannot be separated from our long-term goals of good governance, civilian control over security forces, and respect for human rights. Al-Qaeda and other extremist groups are drawn to those locations where they can take advantage of political and economic vulnerabilities to safeguard their operations, cross borders with impunity, and attract recruits. They benefit when security forces and border guards lack the necessary training, equipment, intelligence, and mobility to disrupt their activities. Their cause is advanced when human rights abuses undermine the credibility of security forces. Terrorists and criminal organizations also take advantage of weak or corrupt criminal justice systems unable to effectively investigate, prosecute and incarcerate criminals.

Our counterterrorism (CT) support for Somalia is embedded in an over-arching policy of support for political, economic, and social reforms to address the underlying sources of violence and strengthen national and regional stability. Achieving political stability, including a Somali government that demonstrates to the broader Somali population it is a viable alternative to al-Shabaab and is capable of sustaining itself, will be the best long-term counter to al-Shabaab.

Similarly, promoting democratic governance is an essential priority in areas threatened by AQIM. The region's youthful and better educated populations are demanding more transparency from public officials and expanded economic opportunities. These youth are increasingly aware of governance norms elsewhere in the world and yearn for the same basic rights in their societies. Rising governance standards in West Africa, in turn, are placing ever greater value on legitimacy and heightening intolerance of unconstitutional transitions of power. Civil society has grown in breadth, sophistication, and influence over the past few years. And the Sahel's democratic institutions have begun to put down roots. Parliaments have become more capable and autonomous, independent media is more diverse and accessible than ever, and elections are increasingly common and meaningful.

In Nigeria, the government must effectively engage communities vulnerable to extremist violence and promote the respect for human rights by its security forces, whose heavy-handed tactics and extrajudicial killings reinforce northerners' concerns that the Nigerian government does not care about them. The appointment of a credible northerner to lead the government response to northern grievances would be an important step in that direction.

Development and Economic Opportunity: It is also vital to reinforce the point that investing in economic and social development is crucial for improving

the security environment. In the Sahel, efforts to address insecurity are often

hampered by poor infrastructure and the inability of national or local authorities to

provide adequate services and educational and vocational opportunities in isolated

areas. AQIM has attempted to exploit this weakness by providing food and other

consumables to generate good-will. Although AQIM's attempts to recruit in the

Sahel have been largely unsuccessful, the limited successes it has had in countries

such as Mauritania can largely be traced to its ability to capitalize on the frustration

among the young over insufficient educational and employment opportunities.

National and local authorities recognize these vulnerabilities and are often highly

motivated to steer their societies in positive directions and our economic assistance

can help.

As part of our strategy to counter the LRA, we are providing support to

address the conditions that leave communities vulnerable to predatory groups such

as the LRA. USAID and the State Department are supporting projects to increase

civilian protection, enhance early warning capabilities, deliver humanitarian relief,

and strengthen the overall resiliency of communities. As we have seen in northern

Uganda and parts of South Sudan, development can play a critical role in pushing

out the LRA and keeping it from returning. Northern Uganda has undergone a

dramatic transformation since the LRA's departure in 2006. The population is able

to move freely, markets are open, and fields are being cultivated. According to

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), an estimated 95 percent of people once living in the camps have now left and moved to transit sites or returned home. The United States has led all donors in supporting the Ugandan-led recovery process.

Economic development also requires tearing down walls that stand in the way of progress – the corruption of elites who steal from their people; the red tape that stops an idea from becoming a business; the patronage that distributes wealth based on tribe or sect. We are helping governments by supporting anti-corruption commissions who are developing reforms, and activists who use technology to increase transparency and hold government accountable.

Enhanced Regional Cooperation: Promoting and enabling enhanced regional cooperation to address security threats is an important priority. The AMISOM presence in Mogadishu and its partnership with the TFG National Security Forces is one of the main reasons for the weakened al-Shabaab we see today. AMISOM counters al-Shabaab, protects Mogadishu, and provides political space for a Somali-led reconciliation process and our "Dual Track" policy. While Somalis reacted negatively in the past to the entry of foreign troops into Somalia, the population has generally not reacted negatively to AMISOM. We are also looking for opportunities to assist regional or sub-regional CT capacity-building efforts. For instance we are working with the Intergovernmental Authority on

Development's (IGAD) Capacity Building Program against Terrorism (ICPAT) to conduct programs that are aimed at building national capacity to resist terrorism and promote regional security cooperation through training programs utilizing international, regional and national experts.

In Central Africa, we are seeking to enhance the capacity and cooperation of the governments in the region as they work together to address the LRA threat. We believe their continued collaboration is essential to keep the pressure on the LRA and ultimately end this threat. The United States has deployed a small number of U.S. military forces to serve as advisors to the partner forces that are pursuing the LRA and seeking to protect local populations. Our advisors are helping the partner forces to enhance their cooperation, intelligence-sharing and fusion, and operational planning. We are also working closely with the African Union as it increases its efforts to address the LRA. Last month, the AU officially launched its Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA. Although many operational details are still being worked out, we believe the AU's involvement can strengthen coordination, information-sharing, and trust among the four militaries pursuing the LRA.

In West Africa, with the possible exception of Algeria, the countries in the region do not currently have the individual military capabilities to attack AQIM's established safe-havens in remote mountain areas or to effectively monitor and

control thousands of miles of open borders. It is therefore essential that they improve their cooperation and interoperability. The key countries in the region – Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger -- have increased bilateral coordination efforts during the past year and we will continue to promote an improved regional effort will tailor our assistance when possible to facilitate this process.

United States Counterterrorism Activities

The United States is committed to working with our Africans partners to address immediate threats and build durable security sector and development institutions required to achieve counterterrorism objectives over the long-term. We cannot rely on short-cuts when confronting the terrorism challenge in Africa and will instead work closely with our partners to build the long-term capacity of the region to frustrate al-Qaeda and other terrorists groups.

Our primary programs to build long-term counterterrorism capacity in Africa are the Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism (PREACT), formerly known as the East Africa Regional Strategic Initiative (EARSI), and the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) in West Africa. PREACT is the U.S. Government (USG) strategy for long-term engagement and capacity building in East Africa to combat evolving terrorism threats in, and emanating from, the Horn of Africa and along the Swahili Coast. PREACT member countries include Burundi, Djibouti, Comoros, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles,

Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. PREACT utilizes law enforcement, military, development, and public diplomacy expertise and resources to support the efforts of willing regional partners to build and sustain their own CT capability. PREACT is principally operated by the State Department, USAID, and the Department of Defense (DOD). Its overarching objectives are: 1) to contain and reduce the operational capacity of terrorist networks in Somalia; 2) to deter and reduce the appeal of and support for violent extremism across East Africa; 3) to reduce terrorist financing across East Africa; 4) to improve and expand border security in East Africa, particularly around Somalia; 5) to build sustainable security and counterterrorism capacities in partner nations; and 6) to improve inter-agency and international community coordination

The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) is the USG's primary vehicle to support the long-term capabilities of the countries in West and North Africa to address the AQIM threat. Many members of TSCTP are counted among the poorest countries in the world and currently lack the capacity to effectively combat this threat over the long-term. We recognize that the security environment in the Sahel requires sustained attention to address a wide range of vulnerabilities and capacity deficits. There is insufficient capacity to monitor and protect immense swaths of largely ungoverned or poorly governed territory. The arid northern half of Mali alone covers an area larger than Texas. Niger is the

among the poorest countries in the world according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Mauritania and Mali also rank near the bottom of the Human Development Index scale. However, they have demonstrated critical political will to fight terrorism and will continue to benefit from U.S. assistance.

TSCTP was authorized in 2005 by the National Security Council to use a multi-year and multi-sectoral approach involving the State Department, USAID, and the Department of Defense to address the terrorism threat in West Africa. It is designed to support regional partner efforts in the Sahel to build long-term capacity to contain and marginalize terrorist organizations and facilitation networks, disrupt efforts to recruit, train, and provision terrorists and extremists, counter efforts to establish safe havens for terrorist organizations, and disrupt foreign fighter networks that may attempt to operate outside the region. Partner countries include Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia.

PREACT and TSCTP serve two primary purposes. The interagency identifies and mobilizes resources to support sustained efforts to address violent extremism in the region for these two critical programs which reflect our recognition that sporadic engagements without adequate follow-up or sustainment would fail to achieve meaningful long-term results in a region with a multitude of basic needs. The emphasis is therefore placed on key capacity deficits that could

be addressed over a period of years. Individual activities supported by PREACT and TSCTP draw resources and expertise from multiple agencies in the U.S. Government including the State Department, the Department of Defense, and USAID.

PREACT and TSCSTP are also designed to assist efforts to coordinate the activities of the various implementing agencies. The coordination takes place at several levels. Action officers representing the various agencies meet periodically in Washington to coordinate activities and share information. Representatives from Washington and the Africa Command (AFRICOM) also meet regularly with our Embassies in PREACT and TSCTP countries. The first line of coordination and oversight takes place at our embassies. While various assessments and inputs from throughout the interagency inform decisions regarding counterterrorism programming, Chiefs of Mission must concur with all proposed activities. They are ultimately the primary interlocutors with the host countries and are responsible for implementing cohesive policy.

Conclusion

We remain convinced that it is in our interest to focus on building the capacity of willing partners in Africa to counter terrorism and establish sustainable security, rather than just pursuing quick fixes. Clear victories against the

underlying security and developmental challenges in the region are unlikely to clearly announce themselves in the near term, but I am confident that a steady and patient approach provides the best opportunity for long-term success.

This process continues to be challenging and there are setbacks, but we can also identify a number of positive developments. For example, while a tremendous amount of work remains in Somalia, al-Shabaab's fortunes have been diminished by internal fractures within the group, pressure from AMISOM and TFG forces, Ethiopian and Kenyan military interventions, and its own failures to address the basic needs of people living in territory under its control. And while many living under al-Shabaab control continue to suffer horrendous conditions and are prevented from receiving humanitarian relief, al-Shabaab leadership has focused on establishing a merger with al-Qaeda rather than on improving the plight of the Somali people.

In Central Africa, the governments in the region have renewed their commitment to end the LRA threat once and for all. The African Union and United Nations are stepping up their efforts, and the United States is providing critical support to enhance both civilian and military capacity to address this threat.

In West Africa, Algeria's successes against AQIM have hampered the efforts of the group's leadership in northern Algeria to direct the organization and threaten targets outside of the region, but it has also resulted in increased activity in

the Sahel. While we have not witnessed an increase in spectacular attacks against

U.S. interests in the Sahel, the group's ability to raise funds from ransom payments

and acquire weapons is a concern.   In response, the key countries in the region

have clearly intensified their individual and collective efforts again AQIM.   They

have taken concrete action along Mali's borders with Niger and Mauritania and

most recently along Niger's border with Algeria. Chad also stepped up efforts to

disrupt AQIM attempts to transit its territory. TSCTP resources are contributing to

training and equipping more capable and professional security forces in Mauritania

and Niger. TSCTP resources are assisting the key militaries to improve their still

rudimentary capabilities to monitor their borders and sustain their units in large

frontier areas.

    Equally important, AQ continues to struggle to attract public interest and

sympathy for its activities. It has had limited success in developing temporary

economic relationships with some communities and it continues to look for

opportunities to develop familial relationships in some areas, but it has failed to

make a credible case that has inspired significant groups should rally around its

flag. We are convinced that long-term efforts to address economic and political

conditions in these areas and persistent and patient efforts to build and sustain

professional security forces will have long-term benefits.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today on this important issue. I welcome any questions you may have.